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AFGHANISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Women are Crafty at Business

USAID and the Directorate of Women's Affairs empower women with skills to produce goods for market and support their families



Photo Courtesy USAID/IRD

Because of this program, Jamela was able to produce higher-quality traditional embroidery and weavings and sell to customers from outside her village at the crafts exhibition. Future events will be held as a result of this exhibition's success.

The Strategic Provincial Roads program has opened up new business opportunities for women living in Nangarhar, Kunar, and Laghman provinces. Once disenfranchised women are now supporting their families and communities.

Families in rural Afghanistan face significant challenges securing steady jobs and steady income. The primary industry in Eastern Afghanistan is agriculture, with only seasonal and temporary job opportunities for most men. Decades of war and conflict have compounded the situation. As a result, women have had to find ways to supplement their husbands' incomes despite their limited opportunities to learn new vocational skills and the cultural obstacles women face in the workforce.

To empower the most vulnerable women in Eastern Afghanistan, USAID's Strategic Provincial Roads program awarded a grant to provide training in tailoring and literacy to disenfranchised women to build their capacity and enhance their businesses. This program was designed to ensure the sustainability of provincial roads by developing the local communities along these rehabilitated roads routes.

With the support of the Directorate of Women's Affairs from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, this grant is improving the economic condition for 630 vulnerable women in Eastern Afghanistan. By providing literacy classes and improving women's skills in tailoring, embroidery, carpet weaving, food processing, and Patto (shawl) weaving, women can produce quality goods for sale.

In June 2010, 50 successful program participants displayed their newfound skills and goods to 145 Afghan and international customers in Jalalabad. The participants' ability to provide a variety of products for their customers highlighted their growth in business capacity.

"This crafts exhibition is a symbol of progress for women," said the Director of Women's Affairs. "After a few months of vocation training from USAID, they learned the basics of business and now have the ability to make products that people want and need. They are now a part of the business community."

The benefits of growing the capacity of women are many. Not only are they able to supplement their families income and help sustain rehabilitated provincial roads, but also having improved roads will help pave the way to new markets in Eastern Afghanistan.